United Nations S/2015/783

Security Council

Distr.: General
7 October 2015

Original: English

Letter dated 7 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to forward herewith an assessment of the work of the Security Council for the month of August 2015 under the presidency of Nigeria (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) U. Joy **Ogwu**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

15-17855 (E) 291015

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 7 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Nigeria (August 2015)

Introduction

During the month of August 2015, under the presidency of Nigeria, the Security Council adopted two resolutions and issued two presidential statements and 11 statements to the press. The Council held an open thematic debate on regional organizations and contemporary challenges of global security. It held three briefings under the item entitled "Peace and security in Africa", it examined the current state of the global response to Ebola virus disease, and it held discussions on security sector reform and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Africa

Burundi

On 4 August, the Council issued a statement to the press condemning the killing of General Adolphe Nshimirimana on 2 August and the violent attack on Pierre Claver Mbonimpa on 3 August. Council members noted that there was no place for violence and called on all actors to remain calm. They appealed to the Government of Burundi and all political actors to resume an inclusive dialogue.

On 10 August, the Council was briefed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonović, on the situation in Burundi. The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs informed the Council of deepening tension in the political arena that had been aggravated by the assassination of General Nshimirimana and the attempted assassination of human rights activist Mr. Mbonimpa. He also reported renewed calls by the opposition for the resumption of dialogue and the formation of a government of national unity in the country. The Assistant Secretary-General noted the lack of progress in the East African Community (EAC) mediation process.

The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights noted the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Burundi. He reported that some 94 people had been killed in election-related violence, most of them among the opposition, and that many more had been arrested and detained since April. He further noted that about 181,000 people had sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

Council members issued a statement to the press in which they took note of the political and humanitarian situations in the country. They condemned the assassination of General Nshimirimana, on 2 August, and the attempted assassination of Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, on 3 August. They urged the Government of Burundi to carry out an independent investigation into those acts and to ensure that the perpetrators were brought to justice.

Council members expressed deep concern about the political and security situations in Burundi and called for the immediate resumption of inclusive dialogue in order to achieve a lasting peace in the country. They encouraged the Government to facilitate the process. Council members underscored the mediation role of EAC and called for support for the peace efforts. Council members welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to dispatch a high-level official to Burundi.

On 28 August, the Council was briefed in consultations by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs on the situation in Burundi. He informed the Council that the President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, had been sworn in for a third term on 20 August, a week ahead of schedule. He also informed the Council that the new cabinet of the President was sworn in on 25 August and that 5 of the 20 ministers were from the opposition parties.

The Assistant Secretary-General apprised the Council of the plans outlined by the President of Burundi to recruit young people into the security forces of Burundi and train them to fight against groups opposed to peace in the country. He informed the Council that political dialogue had yet to resume in Burundi and that a team from the Department of Political Affairs was in Kampala until 30 August to encourage the revival of the dialogue and examine the scope of United Nations support. In addition, he informed the Council that the Secretariat had received a note verbale dated 19 August from the Government of Burundi expressing reservations about the plan of the Secretary-General to send an envoy to support the EAC mediation efforts in the country and its preference that the international community strengthen those efforts.

Council members expressed their concern about the tense political and security situation in the country. They cautioned that violent rhetoric could escalate the already fragile situation in Burundi and jeopardize attempts to restore peace and stability in the country. They stressed that only an inclusive political dialogue could provide a peaceful solution to the conflict and urged the Government of Burundi and all stakeholders to immediately commit to the resumption of such a dialogue.

They also reiterated their support for the intention of the Secretary-General to dispatch, in consultation with the Government of Burundi, an envoy to the country to facilitate a resumption of dialogue in the search for a durable peace. They underscored the importance of the Arusha Accords for the dialogue.

Central African Republic

On 3 August, the Council issued a statement to the press condemning the attack on the convoy of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), on 2 August in Bangui, in which one peacekeeper was killed and several others were injured. They called on the Central African Republic authorities to swiftly investigate, with the assistance of MINUSCA, the attack and bring the perpetrators to justice.

On 5 August, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSCA, Babacar Gaye, briefed the Council on the latest developments in the country. At the same meeting, the representative of the Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission also provided an assessment of the situation in the country. The Special Representative highlighted the improvements in the security and political situations of the country. He reported

on the successful holding of the Bangui Forum, which addressed such critical issues as national reconciliation, reform of the security sector, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and post-conflict socioeconomic development. He also noted the fragile security situation and other challenges ahead for the post-conflict reconstruction and urged the Council and the international community to sustain its engagement with the Central African Republic.

The Special Representative also highlighted the humanitarian situation in the country and noted specifically that more than half of the population remained in need of humanitarian assistance. He called for an increased response to the humanitarian appeal to alleviate the plight of the citizens. He also expressed optimism at the resolve of the transitional authorities to combat impunity. He noted in particular the establishment of the Special Criminal Court and the logistical and financial challenges confronting the authorities.

He reported on the preparations for the elections scheduled for October/November 2015 and emphasized the importance of inclusivity in the conduct of the elections, in particular with regard to the refugees and displaced citizens of the Central African Republic. He underscored the importance of meeting the electoral calendar deadlines to ensure the completion of the transitional period by the end of the year.

In consultations, Council members commended the transitional authorities for their commitment and encouraged them to continue in their efforts. They noted that the security situation remained fragile and that the challenges faced by the Central African Republic could be addressed only through a national and inclusive approach and with the assistance of the international community. They also called upon the donor community to finance disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and other processes that contributed to national reconciliation and ending impunity.

The members of the Council recalled that the absolute priority was the organization of elections which should be inclusive. They reiterated that the deadlines must be met in order to conclude the transition phase by the end of 2015 and to enable a greater focus on the long-term reconstruction and development of the Central African Republic. The members of the Council encouraged the transitional authorities to ensure an inclusive approach in the implementation of the recommendations of the Bangui Forum.

In a statement to the press issued on 9 August, the members of the Council expressed their sorrow at the tragic death of five Rwandan peacekeepers and the injury of eight others serving in MINUSCA.

On 13 August, the Secretary-General briefed the Council on alleged sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by United Nations peacekeepers in the Central African Republic. He described the phenomenon as a global scourge and a challenge for peacekeeping forces all over the world. He underscored the importance of zero tolerance and zero immunity with regard to sexual exploitation by United Nations forces. He further underscored the importance of a strong signal for accountability and institutional responsibility, and in this regard accepted the resignation of the Special Representative, as he had advised. The Secretary-General emphasized the importance of swift national investigations by troop-contributing countries to ensure justice for the victims and the communication of the results of such actions to the

Secretariat. He informed the Council of his intention to appoint Parfait Onyanga Anyanga as his acting Special Representative for the Central African Republic.

Members of the Council shared the Secretary-General's anger and outrage at the allegations of such gross misconduct by United Nations peacekeepers. They welcomed the steps taken thus far by the Secretary-General to ensure investigation and accountability, especially the appointment of a high-level external investigating panel. They noted the symbolism of United Nations forces bringing refuge and protection, and that misconduct by a few should not tarnish the efforts of the thousands of United Nations personnel and peacekeepers. They welcomed the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and emphasized that more efforts should be concentrated on its implementation. They reiterated their support for MINUSCA and paid tribute to the outgoing Special Representative for his tireless efforts in support of peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic. A statement to the press was issued in this regard on 18 August.

Guinea-Bissau

On 10 August, the Council was briefed under "Any other business" by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. He reported on the deepening tension between the President and the Prime Minister and noted that the ongoing political dispute, if not addressed, could threaten the stability of the country and result in a reversal of the progress achieved since the restoration of constitutional order.

The members of the Council commended the peaceful manner in which the people of Guinea-Bissau, including the military, had conducted themselves in spite of the political stalemate. A statement to the press, in which Council members expressed concern over the situation in the country, was issued following the meeting.

They called on the parties to engage in dialogue in order to resolve their differences in the interest of peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau. They recalled resolution 2203 (2015) and stressed the importance of national reconciliation, inclusive dialogue and good governance and the continued civilian control of government as essential for the attainment of lasting peace in Guinea-Bissau. They further stressed that the consolidation of peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau could result only from a consensual, inclusive and nationally owned process and respect for constitutional order that placed the people of Guinea-Bissau first.

The Council members reiterated the importance of sustained international engagement with the authorities of Guinea-Bissau. In this regard, they welcomed the efforts of regional and international actors, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, the United Nations, the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the European Union, to encourage dialogue among the political leaders of Guinea-Bissau. They welcomed, in particular, the efforts of the President of Senegal, Macky Sall, the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, Miguel Trovoada.

On 14 August, the Council was again briefed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs in response to the deteriorating political situation resulting from the dismissal, by the President of Guinea-Bissau, José Mário Vaz, of the Prime Minister, Domingos Simões Pereira, and the Government. The Assistant Secretary-General stated that dialogue remained crucial and urged Council members to increase their efforts to broker peace in the country.

Members of the Council expressed concern about the political developments in Guinea-Bissau and called on the parties to resolve the ongoing political dispute in the interest of peace. They welcomed the continued engagement of the Special Representative and the President of Senegal, in his capacity as the Chair of ECOWAS, and other interlocutors in the search for a peaceful solution to the impasse and underlined the need for concerted action among ECOWAS, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations.

Members of the Council called on the leaders to seek dialogue and consensus in resolving the crisis in a manner that served the interests of the people of Guinea-Bissau. They encouraged all parties to remain calm and called on the security forces, civil society and political leaders to continue to act in a peaceful manner in accordance with the Constitution and the rule of law. They underscored the importance of the non-interference of security forces in the political situation of Guinea-Bissau. They expressed their intention to follow the situation and respond appropriately. A statement to the press was issued the same day.

On 28 August, the Council was briefed by the Special Representative on political developments in the country. He stated that the situation in Guinea-Bissau would remain fragile until the root causes of instability in the country were addressed. He noted that the lack of dialogue among the major political actors in the country had deepened political tension and created a negatively evolving situation. He spoke of the President's dismissal of the Prime Minister and the Government.

He also informed the Council of the appointment of the new Prime Minister, Baciro Dja. He noted the commitment of the military not to intervene in the political process. The Council was also briefed by the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Antonio de Aguiar Patriota. The representatives of Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, in its capacity as Chair of ECOWAS, and Timor-Leste, in its capacity as Chair of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, also made statements during the meeting.

In closed consultations, Council members reiterated their concern about the political situation in the country. They called for a resumption of dialogue and urged national actors to show commitment to the peaceful resolution of the impasse. Members of the Council underlined the importance of creating an enabling environment to take advantage of peacebuilding gains in the country. They noted that a revision of the Constitution might be required to effectively delineate the sharing of responsibilities between the office of the President and the Prime Minister. They underscored the importance of collective national efforts for ensuring the implementation of the national priority plan.

Liberia

On 12 August, the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003) concerning Liberia, Dina Kawar, briefed the Council on the Committee's consideration of the findings and recommendations contained in the update report of the Panel of Experts to the Committee in April and its final report (S/2015/558). She reported that, with the containment of Ebola virus disease and the subsequent drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the impetus was now on the Liberian authorities to assume full responsibility for the country's security. She also noted that little appreciable progress had been made to pass the firearms and ammunition control act, a key element of the legislative framework to regulate, monitor and control arms and ammunition in Liberia.

With respect to arms and ammunition management, the Chair reported that the armed forces of Liberia had begun marking their weapons, in line with resolution 1903 (2009). She also reported that militia networks still persisted along the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire and that they retained the capacity and the intent to conduct deadly attacks, notwithstanding the extremely promising geopolitical developments in the region.

Council members welcomed the implementation of recommendations by the Liberian authorities and the progress in the security situation in the country. They urged the Government to continue to focus on the further implementation of necessary reforms, especially in the security sector. They underscored the importance of capacity-building measures for the country with regard to State control and border management. They encouraged the Liberian authorities to pass the firearms ammunition act without delay. Encouraged by the progress and stability currently prevailing in the country, they agreed on the necessary modification of the sanctions regime and called for continued international engagement with Liberia.

Libya

On 19 August, the Council issued a statement to the press condemning the terrorist attacks in Sirte, Libya. The members of the Council condemned all attacks against the Libyan population by a group that had pledged its allegiance to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). They underlined that the perpetrators of those barbaric acts must be held accountable.

The Council members urged all parties in Libya to collectively work to combat transnational terrorist groups exploiting Libya for their own agendas by urgently and fully supporting an inclusive political process through the formation of a government of national accord aimed at addressing the political and security challenges facing the country.

On 26 August, the Council was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, Bernardino León, on the situation in Libya. The Special Representative stressed the importance of commitment and concerted action by leaders on all sides in the final stages of the Libyan political process. In view of the daunting task ahead, he encouraged the international community to work towards the articulation of a strategy in support of Libya. He noted that the scale of human suffering remained significant, the reduction in military tensions notwithstanding. He also reported that

the activities of ISIL were increasing and required unity and cohesion to be effectively curtailed.

In closed consultations, Council members noted the progress in the political process as well as local ceasefire initiatives in some parts of Libya. They, however, expressed grave concern about the deteriorating political, security and humanitarian situations in the country. They emphasized that only an inclusive and representative government could resolve the political and security challenges confronting the country. In particular, Council members expressed concern about the expansion of extremism by ISIL and other terrorist groups.

Council members expressed support for the ongoing peace process that was aimed at, inter alia, establishing a government of national accord. In this regard, they welcomed the initialling of the political agreement on 11 July 2015 as a critical step towards peace and stability in the country. They urged the parties that had yet to sign the agreement to do so without delay. They further urged the international community to continue to support the political process in Libya in order to achieve a lasting peace. In this connection, they highlighted the importance of close cooperation among the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the Arab League and other regional organizations. Council members underlined their support for the Special Representative.

Mali

On 19 August, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, briefed the Council on the situation in Mali. He reported a series of violent clashes between the Coordination and Plateforme armed groups in the Kidal region, in northern Mali, which threatened to undermine the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in the country, concluded in June. He noted that violations of the Agreement could pose an obstacle to long-term peace.

Council members strongly condemned the recent clashes and noted that such actions placed the implementation of the Agreement in jeopardy. They demanded that the Plateforme and Coordination armed groups immediately cease hostilities and fully respect their commitments under the ceasefire agreement. They encouraged the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to investigate and report on the violations of the ceasefire and in this regard urged the parties to fully participate in the implementation mechanisms.

Council members reiterated their full support for MINUSMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission, Mongi Hamdi, in the execution of their mandates. Some Council members underscored the need to consider targeted sanctions against those who violate the ceasefire or threaten the implementation of the Agreement, as provided for in resolution 2227 (2015).

South Sudan

On 25 August, the Council was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Ellen Margrethe Løj, by means of videoconference from Juba, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, on the situation in South Sudan. The Special Representative reported on the tense political situation and the deterioration of the

humanitarian situation in the country. She informed the Council of the expected signing by the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, of the compromise peace agreement proposed by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development-Plus (IGAD-Plus). She noted the partial signing of the agreement by some of the opposition leaders on 17 August.

Council members expressed concern about the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in the country. They condemned the continued fighting by the parties and underlined the need for a peaceful resolution of the crisis and an end to the appalling humanitarian situation in South Sudan. They also expressed optimism that the President would follow through on his commitment to sign the IGAD-Plus peace agreement without reservation. Council members stressed the importance of the full implementation of the Agreement.

Members of the Council underscored the need to remain engaged regarding the situation in the country. In this regard, they expressed their readiness to act immediately if the President did not sign the agreement as he had undertaken to do.

The Council was also briefed by the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, Cristián Barros Melet, who presented the report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) (S/2015/656). The report catalogued a pattern of crimes against humanity, including the use of rape as a weapon of war, widespread pillaging and targeted attacks against civilians. He noted the Panel's recommendation for the imposition of sanctions on individuals who had aided the war and benefited from the conflict. The Panel also recommended that those responsible for serious crimes under human rights and international humanitarian law should face sanctions. Council members had an exchange of views on the subject.

On 28 August, the Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/16) welcoming the signing of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan by the President of South Sudan. They also welcomed the signatures of the Chair of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition, Riek Machar Teny, and the representative of the Former Detainees, Pagan Amum Okiech, on 17 August. The Council expressed concern about any statement by any party suggesting a lack of commitment to implement the Agreement as contained exclusively in the annex to document S/2015/654. The Council also called upon the parties, with support from the United Nations and the international community, to fully implement the Agreement.

Sudan

On 26 August, the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan, Rafael Dario Ramirez, briefed the Council on the basis of the interim report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005). He informed the Council of the Committee's meeting with representatives of Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya and the Sudan. He said that engaging the neighbours of the Sudan was vital to the effective discharge of the Committee's mandate and expressed appreciation that the countries concerned were willing to cooperate with the Committee in the implementation of the sanctions regime.

The Chair also reported the decrease in the number of military incidents and ground attacks by government troops, rebel groups and non-signatory armed groups. He noted that intertribal violence during the reporting period had also declined and attributed that decline to, inter alia, the strengthening of the military offensive by the Government of the Sudan. He further reported on the violations of the arms embargo, the use of improvised air-delivered munitions by the Sudanese Air Force and possible violations of international humanitarian law by the recruitment of young people, among other issues.

The Chair informed the Council that the Panel was conducting investigations to determine whether artisanal gold mining was being used as a source of financing for the conflict in Darfur.

Council members underscored the importance of cooperation between the Sudan and its neighbours and in this regard welcomed the meeting of the Chair with representatives of neighbouring countries. They further welcomed the improved cooperation between the Panel and the Government of the Sudan. They expressed concern, however, about the flow of weapons and ammunition into Darfur. They noted the very challenging circumstances under which the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur was operating. They also expressed concern about the humanitarian situation, including the displacement of civilians and the recruitment of child soldiers.

Europe

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

On 21 August, the Council was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Farid Zarif. The Special Representative called for cautious optimism despite the significant strides that had been made in overcoming the legacy of hostility and conflict, and urged Pristina and Belgrade to build on the momentum created towards a negotiated political settlement.

He further noted that the leaders from both sides were due to meet in Brussels on 25 August, under the auspices of the European Union, to address outstanding issues. He recalled the adoption, on 3 August, of the requisite constitutional amendment and the laws on the establishment of a special court for war crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Council members welcomed the progress made by the two parties, particularly with regard to the establishment of the special court for war crimes. Some Council members expressed concern about the heated rhetoric between the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Ivica Dačić, and Hashim Taçi of Kosovo during the debate. They stated that it was important for Belgrade and Pristina to continue to build a climate of trust and harmony. They noted that genuine reconciliation remained crucial to strengthening cohesion and laying the foundation for peace and progress. They further encouraged the parties to continue the technical and high-level dialogue to address the outstanding issues of the first agreement. Some Council members reiterated that resolution 1244 (1999) remained the applicable international legal basis for resolving the situation in Kosovo.

Asia

Myanmar

On 28 August, the Council was briefed by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar, Vijay Nambiar. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights was also present at the meeting. The Special Adviser focused his briefing on the humanitarian operation in the aftermath of Cyclone Komen, the preparations for the general elections, the peace process between the Government and ethnic armed groups and the progress made on the national ceasefire agreement. He also reported on the situation in Rakhine State, and provided an update on the establishment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Myanmar.

Council members underscored the importance of the signing and implementation of the national ceasefire agreement. They also looked forward to the holding of elections in November 2015. Some Council members expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in the flooded areas in Myanmar and called on the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to needy populations.

Middle East

Afghanistan

On 9 August, the Council issued a statement to the press condemning the terrorist attacks in Kabul. It reiterated that no violent or terrorist acts could reverse the path towards Afghan-led peace, democracy and stability in Afghanistan.

Lebanon

On 14 August, the members of the Council were briefed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Edmond Mulet, on the activities of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). He noted the calm situation prevailing along the Blue Line and affirmed the importance of the visible marking by UNIFIL of the Blue Line as a confidence-building measure between the parties in support of a permanent ceasefire. He also informed the Council about the ongoing strategic dialogue conducted by the mission on both land and sea as well as by its maritime task force. To continue to support the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), he noted the Secretary-General's request for the renewal of the mandate of UNIFIL and called for more support by Member States for the Lebanese Armed Forces, including through the International Support Group for Lebanon.

Council members expressed concern about the fragile stability in Lebanon, which, if not properly managed, could lead to an aggravation of the security situation. They underscored the imperative for progress to be made in filling the vacancy of the office of the President in order to address the security, economic and social challenges facing the country.

Syrian Arab Republic

On 7 August, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2235 (2015) condemning any use of any toxic chemical, such as chlorine, as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic. The resolution was aimed at starting the process of

identifying those responsible for any use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine, and at designating accountability in that regard. In it, the Council requested the Secretary-General, in coordination with the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), to submit to the Council recommendations, including elements of terms of reference, regarding the establishment and operation of an OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

On 12 August, the Council was briefed on the Syrian Arab Republic (chemical weapons) by the Under-Secretary-General and Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Kim Won-soo. He said that significant progress had been recorded in the work of OPCW, with the successful destruction of five underground tunnels. He expressed optimism that the destruction of the remaining facilities would be completed by the end of September. Regarding the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission, the Acting High Representative informed the Council that two teams had been deployed: one to Damascus to investigate allegations made by the Syrian Government and the other to a neighbouring country to investigate allegations made by the opposition.

Members of the Council welcomed the significant progress made in the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic. They also welcomed the ongoing dialogue between the OPCW technical experts and the Syrian authorities on matters pertaining to the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic and subsequent amendments.

Council members expressed concern about the disturbing development of the use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in the Syrian conflict. Some members called for precautions to be taken to obviate the possibility of non-State actors gaining access to chemical weapons. They condemned the use of toxic materials in the Syrian conflict, in violation of international law. They called for the perpetrators of such heinous acts to be held accountable.

Council members looked forward to the recommendations by the Secretary-General on the establishment of the Joint Investigative Mechanism as envisaged in resolution 2235 (2015). They emphasized the imperative to strengthen the existing cooperation between the United Nations and OPCW.

On 17 August, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/15) in which it expressed its gravest concern that parts of the Syrian Arab Republic were under the control of terrorist groups, such as ISIL and Al-Nusrah Front, and condemned terrorist acts, including attacks against civilians, perpetrated by them and other entities. The Council reiterated that the only sustainable solution to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic was through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process, and in this regard, demanded that all parties work urgently towards the comprehensive implementation of the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012. Following the adoption of the presidential statement, the representative of a Council member stated that his delegation did not subscribe to paragraphs 8 and 10 of the statement in the belief that they violated the sovereignty and the right to self-determination of the Syrian people by promoting its political transition, including the establishment of a transitional Government, without its consent, and thereby contravened the Charter of the United Nations.

On 27 August, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. He informed Council members that over the previous month, violence had continued to escalate across the country. He noted that there had been indiscriminate and targeted attacks by all parties to the conflict, resulting in the loss of life and the destruction of infrastructure.

Council members expressed concern at the dire humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic as the conflict continued to take a heavy toll on innocent civilians. They condemned the perpetuation of widespread fighting throughout the country, especially the use of heavy weapons in populated areas by the parties. They reiterated that attacks on civilians constituted violations of international humanitarian law and urged parties to the conflict to take measures to ensure the protection of civilians at all times. They also reiterated their support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, in facilitating negotiations that could achieve a political resolution on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué.

Yemen

On 12 August, the Council was briefed by the Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, by means of videoconference. He informed the Council that the ongoing conflict was not only aggravating an already dire security situation but also complicating efforts to find a political solution. He noted that, with the liberation of the Aden from the Houthis, it was imperative to take advantage of the prevailing military situation to relaunch a political dialogue among the Yemeni parties.

Council members urged the parties to endeavour to resolve their differences through dialogue, as a military solution to the conflict was not viable. They stressed that only a political solution would lead to a sustainable peace. Council members agreed on the need for access for humanitarian goods and supplies. They expressed support for the efforts of the Special Envoy and encouraged all parties to cooperate with him in the quest for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

On 19 August, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator on the humanitarian situation in Yemen. He informed the Council that the civilian population in Yemen was bearing the brunt of the conflict, and noted especially that four out of five Yemenis required humanitarian assistance and nearly 1.5 million people were internally displaced. The Under-Secretary-General noted the need for airports and seaports to remain open and to be used for both commercial imports and humanitarian supplies, without restrictions.

Members of the Council expressed concern about the continued indiscriminate shelling and airstrikes that had destroyed critical civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and water treatment plants.

Members of the Council noted that the rapidly changing situation with regard to the control of territories between the Houthis and the coalition had resulted in a power vacuum that had worsened the overall security situation and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the country. They urged the warring parties to create an enabling environment for relief goods and supplies to reach those in need. They

considered such an environment to be an essential first step towards easing the humanitarian situation. They appealed to donors to redeem their pledges in an expeditious manner in order to reach the $1.6 billion target to fund the operations of humanitarian agencies working in the country.

Council members considered it imperative that the parties cooperate with the Special Envoy in his effort to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. They paid tribute to the humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations operating in Yemen for their hard work in challenging circumstances.

On 19 August, the Council also issued a statement to the press in which it condemned the seizure of the embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Yemen by the Houthis on 17 August and demanded their immediate withdrawal from the premises.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 19 August, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. He noted that during the month of July, there were hate crimes by extremist elements, retaliatory violence, provocations at the holy sites in Jerusalem and a worrying increase in the number of rockets launched from Gaza towards Israel. He appealed to political, military, community and religious leaders on all sides to work together to reduce tensions, reject violence and prevent extremists from escalating the situation and hijacking the political agenda.

Council members expressed concern about the lack of progress made in the Middle East peace process and stressed that the status quo would not offer a sustainable solution to the lingering crisis. They condemned the escalation in violence between Israelis and Palestinians and stressed that it presented a further threat to the pursuit of a political solution to the long-running conflict.

Council members reiterated that only the realization of a two-State solution could bring a sustainable end to the violence. They expressed concern about the slow pace of the reconstruction of Gaza owing to inadequate funding and encouraged donors to fulfil the pledges they had made at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, in October 2014.

On 25 August, the Council was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, on her visit to the Middle East. She informed Council members that there was overwhelming evidence of forced marriage, slavery and mass rape against women and girls in the conflicts in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. She expressed concern about the atrocities committed by ISIL, including those perpetrated against captured Yazidi women. She also noted that elements of the Syrian Arab Armed Forces had also engaged in acts of sexual violence.

Council members expressed concern about and condemned the use of sexual violence, in particular sexual enslavement and sexual violence relating to or resulting from forced marriage, including as a method or tactic of warfare, in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. They stressed that such acts were abhorrent and urged parties to armed conflict to take all feasible steps to protect civilians from sexual violence.

Council members recalled that rape and other forms of serious sexual violence in armed conflict were war crimes and constituted grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. They urged the international community to remain united in the goal of holding those responsible for such crimes accountable. They expressed the need to bring conflicts in the region to an end in order to reduce the opportunity for the commission of acts of sexual violence.

Council members underscored the need for all relevant parties in the region, while implementing counter-terrorism, peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities, to take into account the importance of the empowerment of women and the protection of women and girls at risk of sexual violence. They acknowledged the efforts of neighbouring countries to protect refugees, including from sexual violence, and called on the international community to contribute to the United Nations humanitarian appeals for Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. On 28 August, the Council issued a statement to the press on sexual violence in conflict in the Middle East.

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

On 26 August, the Council was briefed by the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), Román Oyarzun Marchesi, on the basis of the 90-day report, in accordance with paragraph 12 (g) of resolution 1718 (2006). Council members had an exchange of views on the report.

Thematic issues

Open debate on regional organizations and the contemporary challenges of global security

On 18 August, the Council was briefed by the Secretary-General on the contemporary challenges confronting regional organizations in their efforts towards the maintenance of international peace and security. The Secretary-General outlined the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/446) and called for stronger global-regional partnerships to ensure that the Council could draw on a more resilient and capable network of actors. In this regard, he called for the strengthening of the trilateral cooperation among the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union in order to boost the collective ability to manage, plan and execute peace operations in Africa.

The Secretary-General also emphasized the importance of more predictable financing for regional organizations to enable them to play a more active role in the maintenance of peace and security. In this connection, he highlighted other forms of support, including trust funds and access to expertise, systems materials and services.

Council members stressed the importance of regional organizations in preventing conflict and the participation of civil society in such efforts. They noted that the dynamic and changing nature of contemporary security challenges in the form of terrorism, natural disasters and epidemics necessitated greater cooperation at the regional and subregional levels. They underscored the importance of a sustained focus on building regional conflict-management frameworks in order to

complement the Council's efforts to meet its demanding responsibilities of maintaining global peace and security.

Peace and security in Africa: Ebola virus

On 13 August, the Council members were briefed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Ebola, David Nabarro, and the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Margaret Chan, by means of videoconference, and the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, Téte António, the representative of the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Olof Skoog, and Dr. Mosoka Fallah on the threats to peace and security in Africa posed by Ebola virus disease. The Director-General acknowledged the significant progress that had been achieved thus far and highlighted the improvement in the response capacity of the States affected by the pandemic. She cautioned, however, against a sense of security as all it took was one undetected case in a health facility, one infected contact fleeing the monitoring system or one unsafe burial to ignite a flare-up. She stated that success in the fight against Ebola hinged on attaining and remaining at a level of zero infection. Along with the other briefers, she noted that the lack of public health capacity and infrastructure created the greatest vulnerability to Ebola.

The Special Envoy noted that the implementation of the United Nations response had been successful. He stated, however, that the response had not prioritized community ownership, which had proved valuable for success in the fight against Ebola. He called for technical, operational and financial solidarity with the affected counties. Dr. Fallah, agreeing broadly, noted that creating trust and empowering communities remained essential.

The observer of the African Union noted that the convening power and political leverage of the African Union had brought together technical expertise from 18 Member States, non-governmental organizations, Africans in the diaspora and others to respond to the crisis. He highlighted that a defining support strategy coupled with the speedy deployment of human resources had been critical to the continent's response.

Council members shared the concern of the briefers on the need for vigilance and relentless work to bring Ebola transmission to zero. They noted the continued support for the affected States. They acknowledged that the International Ebola Recovery Conference had been aimed at strengthening public health-care facilities in order to improve their response to future health emergencies. They noted with satisfaction the solidarity at the international and regional levels in response to the epidemic. They also noted that Ebola revealed the fragility in the health-care institutions of the affected States and underlined the importance of vigilance in preventing and responding to any future epidemic or pandemic.

Maintenance of international peace and security: security sector reform

On 20 August, the Council was briefed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Dmitry Titov, the Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and Director of the Crisis Response Unit, Izumi Nakamitsu, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions stated that well-trained, well-supported and service-oriented police and military professionals were a country's best defence against the violence and instability that threatened both lives and livelihoods. He noted the importance of supporting nationally owned efforts for implementing security sector reform. He also noted that security management was most effective when linked to broader reforms and focused on justice, corrections, policing and border management.

He further noted that, while the engagement of peacekeeping operations in security sector reform must concentrate on post-conflict situations, it had a preventive purpose in certain circumstances and should be incorporated early in all relevant operations. In this regard, he recommended that agreements for such engagements be facilitated by the Council, which could also encourage the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to share information on national and international efforts in that vital area.

The Special Representative highlighted the critical nexus between sexual crimes and dysfunctional security sectors and the incomplete reintegration of former combatants. In promoting national ownership in solving such problems, she advised that the focus should be on gaining commitments at the highest political levels. She stated that greater representation of women in security institutions at all levels was important to help to create forces that respected and protected women and children in times of both war and peace.

The Assistant Secretary-General and Assistant Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme noted that security sector reform required both concerted efforts during the lifetime of United Nations peacekeeping operations and longer-term, sustained support. She noted that it was important to ensure the right balance between technical expertise and guidance, on the one hand, and political accompaniment, on the other.

Members of the Council affirmed the vital importance of security sector reform for preventing a relapse into crisis in countries emerging from conflict. They noted the importance of national ownership and commitment in identifying priorities in the implementation of security sector reform. They said that the peculiarity of each situation should also be taken into account and that integral partnerships must be formed with regional organizations. They underlined that consultations with political stakeholders were an essential component for the successful implementation of security sector reform.

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

On 31 August, the Council held a public meeting on the implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507) (wrap-up session).

Council members highlighted areas in which the Council had been successful in addressing issues on its agenda and offered recommendations on strategies to improve the working methods of the Council.